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Ó Domhnaill Abú

IN HOC SIGNO VINCES

O Donnell Clan Newsletter No. 10 Spring 1989

Donegal Castle

NEWS

This Summer being the fourhundredth anniversary of the ill-fated Spanish Armada we had a plethora of historical events and commerations.
Events took place in Killybegs, Dungloe, Carndonagh, Grange and other places culminating with the Spanish banquet in Donegal Town.
Probably the most important of these was the week-long symposium held in Sligo where Hugh O'Donnell(74) of Spain was one of the main speakers. Hugh of course has done much research in Madrid and is quite an authority on the subject, as was shown when he appeared in a series of programmes broadcast by the B.B.C. last August. He also gave the inaugural talk at the Merriman Summer School in Lahinch, Co Clare whose theme this year was the Spanish Irish connection.

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We must congratulate the people of Rathmullan on an excellent historical weekend in which they commerated the "Flight of the Earls". Having restored an old historical tower known locally as the 'Battery' which they hope to use as an interpretive centre, a seminar on the 'Flight' was organised to coincide with it's official opening. After the official opening we had the pleasure of the first lecture ,"From Rathmullen to Rome by boat, coach and horseback", given by that wonderful orator and scholar, His Eminence Cardinal Thomas O Fiaich, Archbishop of Armagh. His talk lasted seventy minutes and held the audience spell-bound. Immediately after that we heard Frank O'Donnell LL.M., Solicitor, speak on Ulster after the 'Flight'. Frank is the son of the late well-known Donegal lawyer and politian, Pa O'Donnell. On Saturday night Nuala Ni Dhomhnaill (64a) RTE presenter/reporter gave a talk on the O'Donnells from Kinsale to the present. This lecture illustrated the fortunes of those who remained after the 'Flight' and the fact that Nuala herself is a direct descendant of one of these families gave it an extra quality. The second speaker on Saturday night was Michelene Kerney Walsh who at the request of the Irish Government has spent many years researching the Irish documents in the Spanish archives in Simancas (see ODA Nos.4&6). She brought home with startling reality the ambitions, frustrations, plans and setbacks of the Northern Chieftains during the last years before Kinsale and during their subsequent years in exile. This weekend in Rathmullan brought toghther these eminent lecturers

Frank O'Donnell speaking

at Rathmullan.

Hugh (74) in Sligo.

whose interest lies in that era of our history dealing with the last days of old Gaelic Ireland and these four lectures neatly complimented one another.

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Our sympathy is extended to Leopoldo O´Donnell, Duke of Tetuan (70) on the death of his wife Consuelo, who died in March 1988. She of course is the mother od Hugh, Count de Lucena (74). Hugh´s two oldest children Carlos and Maria spent the Summer months in Athlone perfecting their English.

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While visiting Medugorje in Yougoslavia where the Blessed Lady is said to appear daily to certain teenagers, I had the pleasure of meeting Milona Von Hapsburg, a descendant of the Imperial House of Austria (see ODA No 7,Max O´Donnell and Franz Joseph). This lady has given up her home and job to devote her life to the Marian cause in Medugorje. She works as secretary and interpreter to Fr. Slavko, a most demanding job.

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During the Summer I´ve had some letters and visits from O´Donnells seeking their ´roots´. It is quite difficult to trace most Irish families further back than 1850 as records are few. It was a deliberate policy of the British at the time to destroy the identity of Gaelic Catholic families. It was only with the relaxation of the Penal Laws around the middle of the last century that church records began to be kept but unfortunately many of the earlier ones were damaged or lost. A genealogical service is being set up here in Co. Donegal and hopefully it will be in operation within the next five years. It is the brainchild of Arthur Speers, retired Assistant County Engineer and I too am involved. So I would ask all O´Donnells to collect all information about their families in the hope that with the aid of computers pedigrees could be extended.

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Count Gabriel O´Donnel of Austria (75) was in Ireland during November when he was special guest of the Irish Military History Society at their annual dinner in Dublin. His son, Douglas, accompanied him.

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Other News

It seems we are to have two Clan Gatherings next year. Eddie O´Donnell, Chairman of the Donegal County Council intends to organise a one-day rally at the Rock of Doon sometime in June while Mrs. Crossan and the members of the Donegal Town Developement Association are planning a week-long gathering beginning on the 16th. of September. Apart from the date, nothing else is definite about the Donegal one.

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Books

To anyone interested in a short simple book of Irish History, I would very much recommend "A Short History of Ireland" by Martin Wallace, published by Appletree Press, 7 James st. South, Belfast. ISBN 0-86281-171-6 costs about one pound and is the most precise , complete and best layed out book on the subject that I´ve ever come across.

Another book, just published by ´Worldbook´ as part of the ´Childcraft´ series is the ´Story of Ireland´. It gives the history of Ireland in story form and although a lovely book it has many flaws, e.g. it states that Red Hugh O´Donnell was an Earl and that he sailed with O´Neill in 1607. Firstly, Red Hugh never had that title (such a title would be repugnant to any Irishman) and secondly, he died in 1602. V.O´D.

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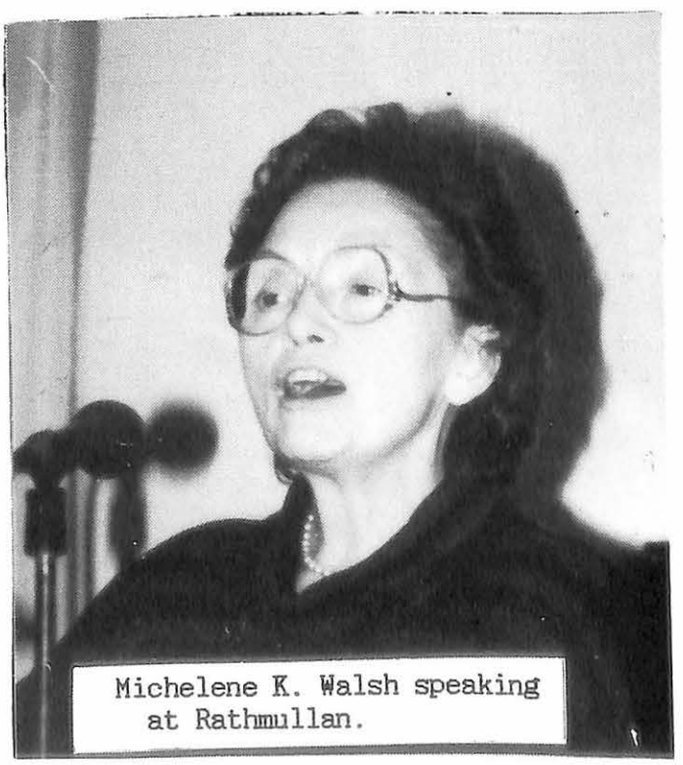


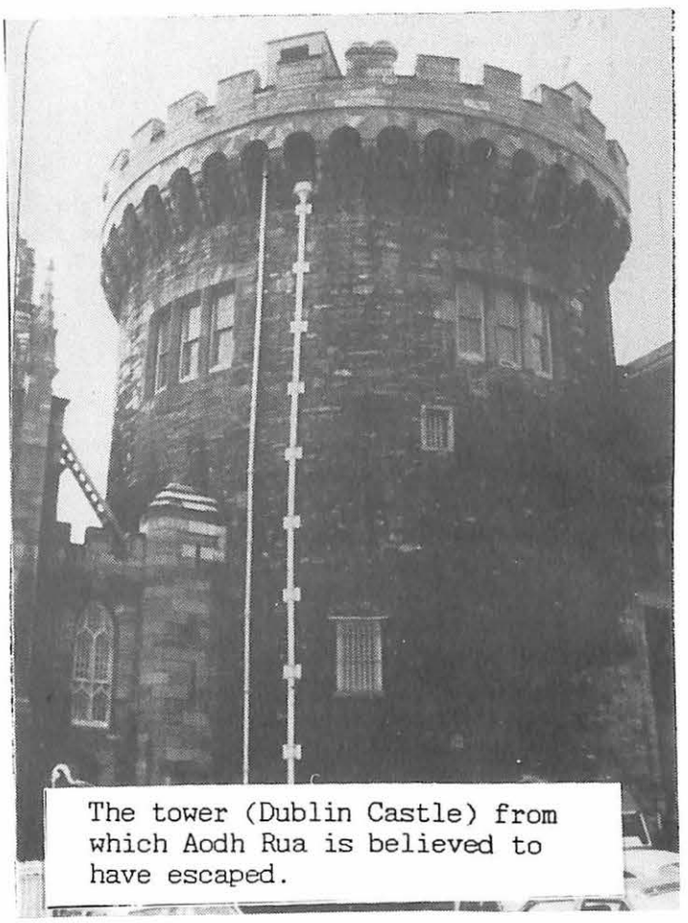
Michelene K. Walsh speaking at Rathmullan.

The Capture and Escape of Aodh Rua.

The opening lines of 'Beatha Aodha Ruaidh Ui Dhomhnaill' written by Lughaidh O'Cleirigh in 1616 and translated by Rev. Dennis Murphy in 1893 are as follows, "A famous progency sprung from O'Donnell." (This was Aodh Dubh(5)). Ineen Dubh, daughter of James MacDonnell, Lord of the Isles (of Scotland) was wife of O'Donnell and mother of the most renowned of his children - Aodh Rua, Rory, Manus and Caffir.

Having been fostered by several of the noble houses of Ulster, "then he continued to grow and increase in comeliness and urbanity, tact and eloquence, wisdom and knowledge, goodly size and noble deeds, so that his name and fame spread throughout the five provinces of Erin among the English and the Irish, even before he passed the age of boyhood and completed his fifteenth year."

It seems that the birth of Aodh fulfilled many prophecies including one by St.Colmcille - "There will come a man glorious, pure, exalted, who will cause mournful weeping in every territory; he will be the god-like prince, and he will be king for nine years".



The tower (Dublin Castle) from which Aodh Rua is believed to have escaped.

All this plus the fact that Aodh's sister, Joan, was betrothed to Aodh O Neill, disturbed the English to such an extent that they planned to imprison him from an early age.

The kidnapping of Aodh Rua is a famous story and subject of the Irish poem in O'D.A. No. 7, 'Fuadach Aodh Rua'.

In September 1587, the Lord Deputy, Sir John Perrot, sent a ship disguised as a Spanish merchantman to Rathmullan where she dropped anchor opposite the castle of MacSweeney, where Aodh Rua was visiting at the time.

Aodh along with some of his friends was invited aboard to sample the fine wines and beers brought by the ship. The youths unsuspectingly accepted. While they were enjoying 'Spanish hospitality' they were suddenly seized, unarmed and imprisoned in a well-secured apartment, while the crew on deck weighed anchor and prepared to sail.

As the ship reached deep water, those on shore realised what was happening but by then it was too late to take action.

On arrival in Dublin Aodh was incarcerated in the Castle. During his stay there he never gave up seeking a means to escape. This of course was difficult as the tower (probably the Birmingham Tower) in which he was kept was a tall, strong structure surround ed by deep water and, of course, well guarded. However, with the aid of outsiders, a plan was formed. Towards the end of Dec. 1590 a rope was smuggled into his cell. On a prearranged night Aodh along with his cellmates managed to remove the iron bars from the window. They then lowered themselves by means of the rope to the ground outside the tower. The guard on the main gate, it seems, was well bribed to neglect his duty for a brief moment that night. Outside the walls a guide (Art Kavanagh was his name) was waiting who quickly led them from the city.

But the boys, wearing bad footwear and through lack of strength and exercise soon grew tired. The quide was sent to Phelim O' Toole, whom the youths regarded as a friend, for help. However, to their great disappointment, they were soon handed back to the English and this time their confinement was more severe. Aodh was bound in chains and the guard doubled.

But he was determined to escape. A second plan began to take shape and about a year later, on the fifth of January 1592 (and not the 25 Dec. as many books report) Aodh made his second attempt. His comrades on this occasion were Henry and Art O'Neill, sons of Shane the Proud, with whom he had shared his cell since his recapture.

Files had been smuggled in (it is believed that Aodh O Neill had much to do with the business) with which they cut their bounds, and again, they descended by rope, crossed the moat and with the help of a guide made their way out of the city.

The weather on this occasion was more inclement than on their previous attempt and in their haste they lost Henry O'Neill.

As they left the city behind and began to climb the Wicklow Hills the rain turned to sleet and snow from which they suffered being poorly clothed. Soon Art became exhausted and had to be helped along by Aodh and the guide but after a while the going became impossible.

At this stage Aodh and Art sought the shelter of a lofty cliff while their guide proceeded to Fiach Mac Hugh, an Irish Chieftain whose home was in the impregnable valley of Glenmalure.

Fiach immediately sent a party to search for the two youths bringing with them food, drink and clothes. It was difficult to find them at first as it had snowed alot during the night and one cliff face looked like another but finally they were located, covered with frozen hailstones.

The two bodies huddled together under the frozen mass seemed more dead than alive, indeed Art, although alive then, died shortly after and was buried there. Aodh made a remarkable recovery but suffered severe frost bite of both feet. He later had both big toes amputated and was lame for the rest of his life.

As soon as Aodh had recovered fully he headed north. Travelling on horseback along with a small escort he crossed the Liffey right under the walls of Dublin Castle, for they knew well that every other crossing was closely guarded.

Among his escort were, Phelim O'Toole and his brother. This was probably a gesture of reconciliation. Having accompanied him well north of Dublin, and so beyond the most dangerous part of his journey the O'Tooles took their leave and returned south. Aodh was now in the care of Turlough Bui O Hagan, one of O'Neill's most trusted men. Turlough was also an excellent choice as he spoke the language of the English and was well acquainted with O'Neill's friends both Irish and English.

Boldly travelling the main roads of Meath on two fine horses they reached the Boyne before morning. Here, rather than chance riding through Drogheda where they might be recognised, they paid a fisherman to ferry them across in a currach and bring them their horses via the town later in the day.

About two miles north of the river they visited and were entertained by Sir Garret Moore, an English Lord who was friendly with O'Neill.

Having spent two days enjoying the hospitality of this gentleman, they continued their journey. They left after nightfall, and travelling all night and all next day, they made their next stop at the home of Turlough O'Neill of the Fews where they received a great welcome.

They now felt safer as they were in O'Neill territory. Next day they reached Armagh and on the following day arrived in Dungannon where their host was O'Neill himself. Here Aodh was entertained secretly as O'Neill was still submissive to Dublin Castle.

Four days and four nights he spent there and on leaving, was provided with an escort to protect him from robbers and woodkern, until he reached Lough Erne. Here he was received by Maguire, Chief of Fermanagh who gave him the best of hospitality.

Having rested here he travelled down the Lough by boat, and on reaching the lower shore, where Beleek stands today, was met by a band of his own faithful and loyal people for he was now in his own country. They travelled to Ballyshannon, where the O'Donnells had a well-fortified castle. Here he was made welcome by many of his clansmen who gathered from all over that area.

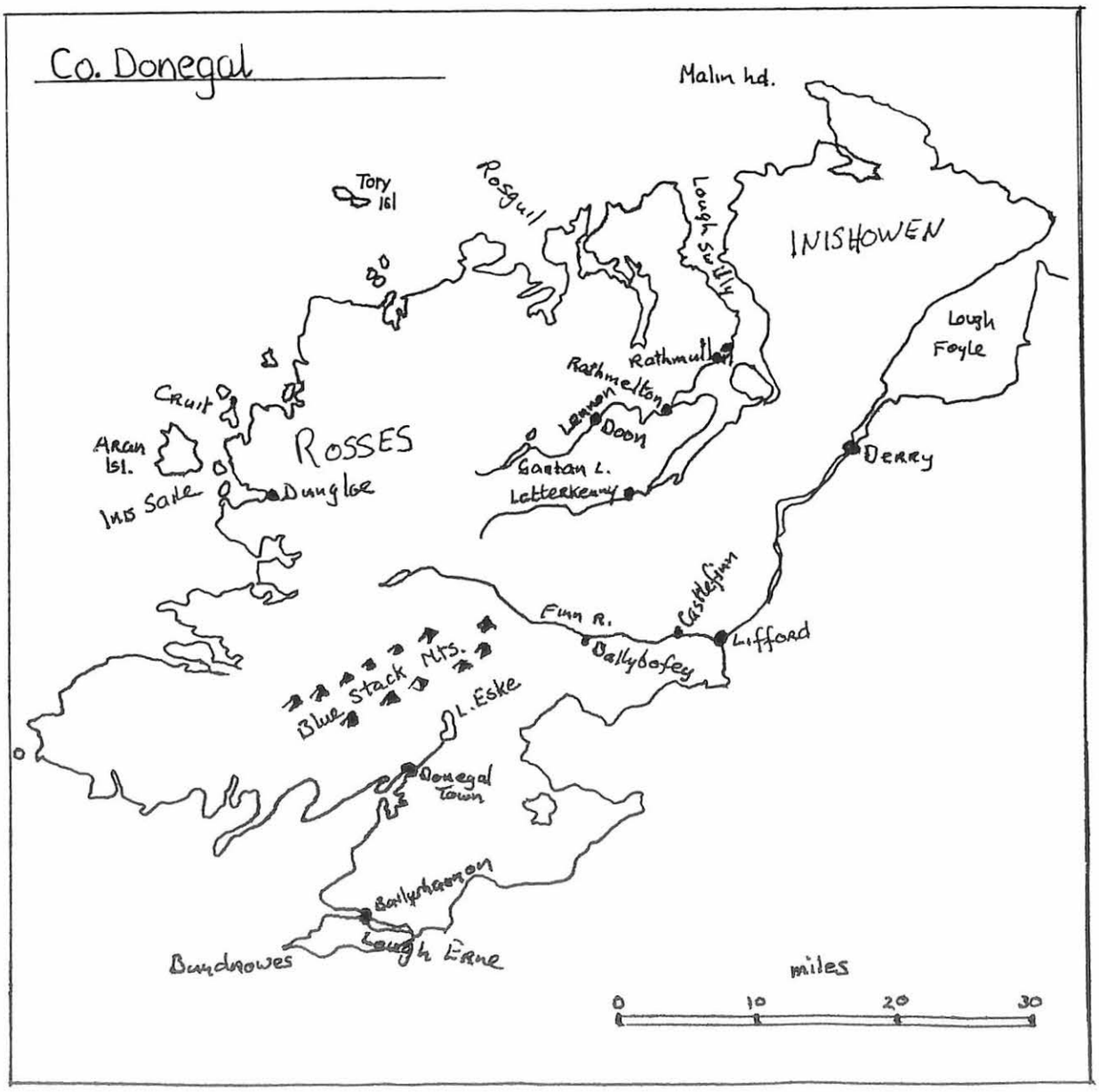
But all was not well in the land of Connal. For the past few years the English had gradually made many encroachments upon it, even taking up residence in O'Boyle's castle two miles from Donegal and closer still, in the Monastery only a few hundred yards from Donegal Castle. Thus Aodh found his native territory practically overrun by the enemy.

Immediately he commenced to assemble an army but before an engagement could take place the English departed after which the Brethern returned to the Monastery.

Aodh now had time to have his feet seen to and it was at this stage that the physicians decided to remove his toes as they couldn't cure them otherwise.

By April when his wounds were almost healed he set about uniting his people. He assembled all those who were loyal to him at Kilmacrennan, O'Boyles, McSweeney Banagh, McSweeney Doe, McSweeney Fanat and many other smaller septs. Having held council, the nobles including O'Donnell himself (since he was aware of his feebleness and advanced age) agreed to transfer the chieftaincy to Aodh Rua . On the third of May at the Rock of Doon as was customary (see ODA No.9) Aodh was inaugurated and acclaimed "O Domhnaill".

Nuala(64a) at Rathmullan.



O'DONNELL DWELLING PLACES

The O'Donnells first resided on an island,probably a man-made one (crannog), in Lough Veagh. But where was Lough Veagh? Here follows an article which appeared in the Donegal Annual 1965.

"The Crannog of Lough Veagh:

Since the visit of John O'Donovan here, exactly 130 years ago, most writers have followed his identification of the centuries-old O'Donnell Crannog of Lough Veagh with the little island in Glenveagh Lake. Now this O'Donovan-sponsored doctrine must be abjured, as its error has been proved in a recent piece of research by a Donegal scholar in this journal. From this we learn that Loch Beathach (or Lough Veagh) was the old name for Gartan Lough (just over the hill from Glenveagh) and was known as such to Manus O'Donnell (d.1564) and his forbears, who had their lake-girt stronghold there for many generations.

"Here then on this island on Gartan Lough, and not in Glenveagh, was O'Donnell's medieval fort. Here was the scene of Godfrey O'Donnell's historic homecoming on his bier from the decisive victory over the Connacht Normans at Credran, in 1257. Here, we may take it, in the words of Aubrey de Vere:

O'Donnell lay sick with a grievous wound:
The leech had left him, the priest had come;
The clan lay weeping upon the ground,
Their banners furled and their minstrels dumb.....!

From this island fort too, the dying, but dauntless Godfrey, still on his bier, led the Cenel Conaill against the invading Brian O'Neill to win the day at the Swilly, in 1258, and there to die and be buried at Conwall, where his tomb is still to be seen. 'This', states the Four Masters, 'was no death of cowardice, but the death of a hero, who had at all times triumphed over his enemies'....

Gartan Lough is drained by the Lennon River and it was on the banks of this river close to where Ramelton stands today, that the O'Donnells had their first permanent home (see ODA No. 1)

Later, they built castles or forts at Bundrowes, Ballyshannon, Lifford, Caoluisce, Castlefinn and Donegal.

They also had a fortress, the ruins of which still exist, on an island known as 'O'Donnell Island' in Lough Eske a few miles from Donegal Town. It was here that Aodh Rua (12) imprisoned O'Connor Sligo. O'Connor was released by Rory after Aodh's death.
As Aodh Rua destroyed Donegal Castle before Kinsale (see ODA No.1) Rory returned to Lough Eske Castle after the battle. This tower-house was built on the shore of Lough Eske and it was from here that Rory set out on his journey to Rathmullan to board the ship that took him to the Continent in 1607.
On Rory's departure his property was confiscated by the English, but his mother, Ineen Dubh, seems to have been resettled in the east of the County as we find her shortly afterwards living in Monagavlin Castle on the banks of Lough Foyle. Lifford Castle was occupied by other members of the family until Rory of Lifford (22) was moved to Connaught during the Cromwellian Plantations sometime prior to 1664.

by V.O'Donnell.

O'DONNELL OFFICERS

Under the Clan System, lesser Clans were delegated an office by a superior Clan. Here is a list of the smaller Clans and the offices they held from the O'Donnells.

Mac Roartys, custodians of the 'Cathach'.
MacSweeneys, standardbearers and commanders of gallowglasses.
O'Breslins, brehons (Judges).
O'Clerys, historians and genealogists.
O'Dunlevys, physicians.
O'Friels, Chief inaugurators.
O'Gallaghers, commanders of cavalry.
Wards, poets.
O'Kerrigans, harpists.
O'Timoneys, cattle drovers.

Argentinian O'Donnell visits Donegal Castle

Mr. Guillermo O'Donnell, an Argentinian living in Brazil, paid a special visit to Donegal Town last week to visit the O'Donnell Castle, the ancestral home of his forbears. He was accompanied by Mr. Vincent O'Donnell, a schoolteacher living in Inver who publishes a regular newsletter about the activities of his kinsfolk in the O'Donnell Clan. It was through reading one of Vincent's publications that Guillermo first became interested in paying a visit to Donegal. His brother Alex was in Donegal three years ago and came across the newsletter and sent it to his brother Guillermo.

Guillermo O'Donnell is President of the International Political Association, a worldwide organisation, and is a Professor of Politics in Sao Paulo, Brazil. His particular branch of the O'Donnell family arrived in Spain after the Flight of the Earls and were given a welcome in royal circles. His great, great grandfather Santiago O'Donnell was invited by the then King of Spain to create an Academy of Mathematics of Vice Royalth Plata in Buenos Aires.

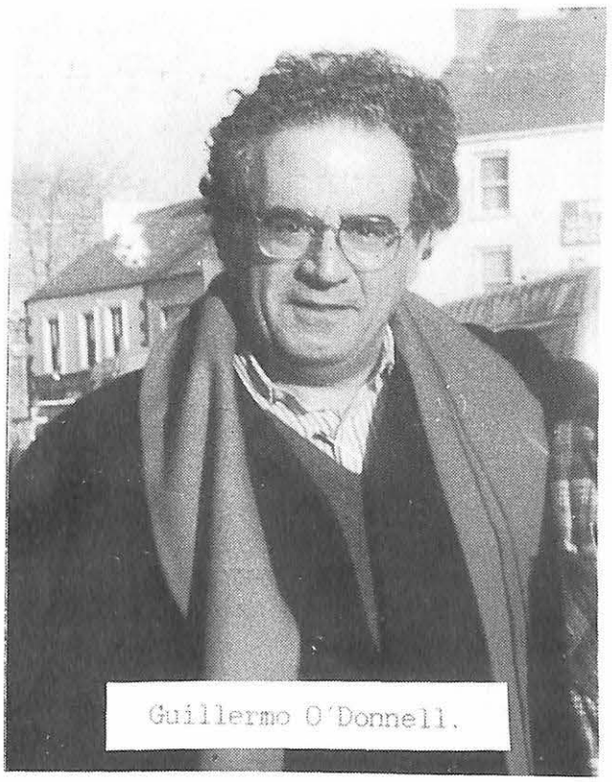
Guillermo was born in Argentina and was educated there. He taught in one of the universities and published a number of books. Because of his leaning towards democracy and his detest for dictatorship he fell foul of the General Videla regime, or dictatorship, that existed in Argentina at the time. His outspoken comments and well-known views got him into trouble. His books were banned and he left the country in 1979 and took up residence in Brazil where he carried on his teaching. Although the military regime in his native country has since been replaced he still lives in Brazil.

His brother, Mario, a well-known novelist in Argentina, is now a member of the ruling party and was appointed Minister for Culture in '84-'87. He is currently running for parliament and Guillermo places him a number one favourite for a large vote. "Democracy will always win out".

It was something of a shock in the circumstances for Guillermo to face a gruelling at the hands of the authorities in Heathrow when he arrived there en route to Ireland. They examined his passport, showing him a native of Argentina and asked him where he had come from and where he was going. He explained that he was born in Argentina, lived in Brazil, had been on an annual lecure tour in Notre Dame University, U.S.A., had flown back to Italy, and had then while in Europe decided to come to Donegal.

"This, together with the name O'Donnell, caused them some apparent confusion", he comments amusedly. He was immediately taken out of the queue and shown into a room where he was "very much grilled". As he says himself, he was not scared as he had suffered years of this type of harrassment at the hands of Videla hirelings and he had become hardened to this kind of treatment, but he was greatly annoyed at the questioning and the indignity inflicted on him.

He actually missed his connecting flight and had to wait some hours before getting another one. He was allowed to sit up in the first class, presumably by way of amelioration or compensation for the way he was treated. They could also have been at that stage conscious of the faux paus they had made in their heavy-handed treatment of a distinguished overseas visitor, who was after all only en transit at Heathrow. "Next time I visit Ireland I will make sure I will choose a plane that will not fly to England", he said.


Guillermo O'Donnell.

The above is taken from the 'Donegal Democrat' of the 8th. Nov. 1988. There are, however, a few errors, e.g.

1. Guillermo is President of the International Political Science Association.
2. The O'Donnells went to Spain in the middle of the 18th. century.
3. His great, great, grandfather created the Academy of Mathematics in what was then called the Vice Royalty of the Rio de La Plata (River Platt).

Guillermo visited Donegal the last weekend in Nov. and I must say it was a delight to have such a jolly, friendly and interesting guest. I hope to publish more about this unique family in a later issue. V.O'Donnell.

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